

REGULAR MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING
OF THE FALLS CHURCH PLANNING COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 21, 2009
Council Chamber

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Lawrence called the meeting to order at 6:53 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Ms. Hockenberry
Mr. Lawrence
Mr. Kearney
Mr. Meeks
Ms. Rodgers
Ms. Teates
Mr. Wodiska

Administrative Staff Present:

Ms. Cotellessa,
General Manager
of Development
Services and
Planning
Director

3. ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

Ms. Rodgers moved, and Ms. Teates seconded, to adopt the agenda.

Upon voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

4. PLANNING COMMISSION REPORTS:

Mr. Wodiska attended last Wednesday, September 16, a CACT meeting on the traffic calming for Lincoln Avenue. The residents of Lincoln Avenue met to discuss what measure they wanted to see implemented which would go to a vote. Paul Silberman, a consultant with Sabra Wang, presented several alternatives and the one that the citizens probably were going to recommend for a vote was the one where on Lincoln Avenue they would put in four islands of approximately 120 feet each but it would be an 8 foot wide island.

Mr. Wodiska noted the width of the island was the topic of much debate. The rest of the street was going to be approximately 18 feet on either side, and more discussion was required to determine if there was going to be striping for the ability to park cars on the left and right side of the road. Legally they'll be able to park except for where the islands are.

Ms. Rodgers inquired if this was something the residents were planning to put in themselves or if the City was going to be asked to do this. Mr. Wodiska said through the traffic calming procedures, once the approval of the CACT was had, they would ask the city manager to help with implementation and they're definitely asking the City to fund this.

The two major proposals being voted on had significant costs compared to normal traffic calming measures. Mr. Wodiska believed the cost to be approximately \$57,000. There was discussion that there was some additional funding source. The thinking was it was a gateway to the City and required something additional than standard speed bumps.

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Ms. Rodgers said it was very similar to the scenario on Hillwood Avenue which went through a lot of permutations. Hillwood Avenue came before the Planning Commission because it required a site plan. Hillwood Avenue's islands might be almost 8 feet wide but they cost considerably more than \$57,000.

Mr. Wodiska acknowledged Hillwood Avenue came up and was the model the citizens compared Lincoln Avenue to. The islands proposed are wider than 8 feet, the street is considerably wider as well, so the impact will be about the same in terms of traffic calming as Hillwood. There was discussion about the Hillwood costs, and he remembered somebody saying it was way in excess of 57,000.

Ms. Rodgers said Hillwood seemed to be working and wished them good luck.

Ms. Cotellessa said this section of Lincoln Avenue that the CACT was focused on is from Great Falls East to the Arlington border. That general section of road is 44 feet of paved right of way, coming down to 42 feet at one end, but most parts it's 44 feet. With an 8 foot median, it would leave 18 feet on either side for a parking lane. It's wider than what is on the small streets, but it's not a huge through lane.

Ms. Cotellessa thought there were three islands but there may be four. It was designed with two purposes in mind: None of the islands block any left or right turns out of anybody's driveways, and the second was this section of Lincoln Avenue, if they so chose the western part of Lincoln Avenue, west of Great Falls, it could be mimicked so drivers have a common expectation coming down the road and so they don't do something different in one section of the road than they do in another. All of that was carefully vetted.

Ms. Cotellessa noted Hillwood Avenue is quite a bit wider in its pavement so islands may not look quite as wide but the thought on Lincoln Avenue is they were taking care of some turning issues and safe escape, people coming out of Meridian, can get behind one of those islands and wait to carry on.

Ms. Cotellessa further advised the commissioners the community must go out to the neighbors who live between Great Falls and the eastern City boundary, which consists of 39 households, and they must get 29 people to affirmatively come in and say this is what they want. If that occurs, then the CACT will forward a recommendation to the city manager to do this and the City has grant funding in place to be able to do this.

5. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS: None.

6. PLANNING DIRECTORS REPORT:

Ms. Cotellessa noted she wasn't present at the last meeting but noted there was a question of the zoning of the Park and Virginia subdivision piece which was properly zoned T-1. She did go back and look at the Comp Plan language. There is language for several parcels around it but not for that particular parcel so it is by right able to be resubdivided.

On the BB&T case where it was recommended to go to the BZA for denial, Ms. Cotellessa informed the commissioners BB&T was very interested in trying to solve the problem. They've gone back and were looking again at two or three previous alternatives and other ways to deal with the fight between the handicapped spaces and the access and a clearer understanding of the background traffic and how it

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contributes to that background traffic. They're out there redrawing and they would like to come back to the Planning Commission in a worksession. They could go forward to the BZA but they thought it would be helpful in looking at alternatives and they may be coming back to the Planning Commission again.

Ms. Cotellessa sent a basic outline by e-mail to the commissioners of a site plan amendment action for a deck in the Colonial Garden Townhouse development at the last meeting. There were concerns about whether or not a variance was warranted to allow a larger deck when some use could be made of the property to put a deck in the back.

Staff looked and there was last minute information at the meeting that a variance had previously been granted for a 35 foot setback. What had been determined in looking at this particular piece of property, was with the already approved variance for the actual house setback, and with the zoning allowance for a deck to encroach 6 feet beyond that, the applicant has an opportunity without a variance to do an 8 foot deep deck.

The BZA looked at the Planning Commission's recommendation, looked at the code requirements for a variance, and looked at the ability at the applicant in doing a deck and concurred with the Planning Commission in denying the application for a variance. The applicant is now proceeding to do a minor site plan amendment to do a deck which they're allowed to do within the setback perimeters already established.

They have approximately 8 feet. Staff asked the applicant to go back and get it professionally drawn to make sure it was accurate and make sure it would work with the stairs within the setback of the deck, to make sure the rise of the stairs and the stoop at the top matches and it would all work. When they bring back construction documents and a plat with dimension lines, it was Ms. Cotellessa's intention to approve it administratively. In this particular development, site plans in the past have been administratively passed.

She stated the applicant's been through the ringer on this project and in the zoning ordinance update one thing they'll be looking at is straightening the process out to make it easier.

Her initial thought was to go out to the townhouse communities and have them as a community come in and do a typical site plan amendment, one for everyone. In this particular community it wouldn't have worked because there is no homeowners' association.

The plan will be finally circulated to all city departments. They don't expect any issues with that and they'll be proceeding with obtaining their building permit for the project. It was important because it was seen at the variance stage and letters had been sent out. Assuming that the final drawings showed everything they see, it should be approved fairly shortly.

Chair Lawrence commented they had a right to do a 6 foot deck but the BZA found they had a right to do an 8 foot deck.

Ms. Cotellessa explained you are entitled to go beyond your setback line six feet without a deck. The setback line on this house was established at 35 feet. The house actually was plopped down about 37 feet from the lot line, so there is 2 feet they can have more of house and then a 6 foot deck beyond that. What they're doing is allowing them to have the full 8 foot deck.

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Ms. Teates said it had to do with the varying size of the back yards.

Ms. Cotellessa said the deck now would be shorter and a bit wider because on a townhouse it can go side to side, so there will be a decent amount of space on their deck.

The Chair opened the item to the public. Hearing no comments, the Chair closed the item to the public.

Ms. Hockenberry inquired about the zoning on the lot on Park Street. Given that there will be two houses there, one fronting on Park and the other fronting on North Virginia and parking spots for the library will be lost, she suggested negotiations needed to take place with the surrounding buildings to have evening parking available.

Ms. Cotellessa agreed that parking was an interesting issue and after the joint worksession this evening there would be a discussion which goes to parking and issues that some property owners have with folks parking to go to the library after hours on their site and how it affects them along with the issues with towing. There is a need to get a good handle on shared parking, what it means, and how the community can effect that.

Ms. Hockenberry suggested leasing parking after hours. Federal Realty's representative was present at the last Planning Commission meeting and she would like to hear back from them for a decision on whether you can walk from Giant to CVS without getting towed. She spoke to the manager at Giant and he had no idea about it.

In response to comments from Ms. Hockenberry, Ms. Cotellessa announced that beginning in October the Granicus system was expected to start. All Planning Commission hearings and City Council hearings will be available for web streaming, which would be available on the web site at any time by clicking on an item agenda.

Ms. Teates mentioned she saw equipment on the Noland site for BJs. Ms. Cotellessa said the demo permit for BJs was approved on Friday afternoon.

Ms. Teates asked about Gateway and was it still in staff review. Ms. Cotellessa said The Gateway project was being looked at and revised by the applicant. Wednesday night, September 23rd, the applicant is going out to Gresham Community to show them where they are and then based on that feedback they should be coming back to the Planning Commission fairly soon.

Ms. Cotellessa also advised the commissioners the project on the corner of North Lee and Park Avenue, the Palladium, was basically back in Mr. Khanmalek's court. He was looking at several different scenarios and looking at financing options and the best options for how he plans to develop it. There had not been any active back and forth for two or three months.

Ms. Rodgers inquired about a letter she received from the Falls Church Housing Corporation talking about grant money. One of the sentences in the letter said "As approved by the Falls Church City Council, FCHC's new development, City Center South Apartments, will eventually include a companion building with 50 units for families."

Ms. Rodgers was at the worksession regarding this and remembered it was a concept

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and asked if there was some approval she didn't know about.

Ms. Cotellessa said that letter was a fund raising letter for the Housing Corporation which she also received. They applied for a grant for both elderly and family money, two separate pools of money. As part of that grant application, they attached and included their original SE application which was 176 units and noted in that application that some changes would need to be made and they needed to go back to the SE to revise it. They have been awarded tax credits for the elderly portion and what they're trying to say in that letter is they've gotten an award for the elderly portion and as previously said, there would be a family portion as well.

T.C.B. is changing the numbers based on their pro formas and how they generally do things, how many units there will be in each. No matter what the configuration is, they're going back to City Council and back to this body before they are approved. She thought it was a general statement, although it says 50 units which is what they're looking at right now, she understood in the next few weeks they'll see more on what they'll be coming forward with. Ms. Cotellessa said she had not seen anything regarding this yet.

In response to further comment by Ms. Rodgers, Ms. Cotellessa noted they were approved by the City Council for the older scenario and they're revising it and they do not have current approval that includes that number of units.

Ms. Rodgers saw a copy of the letter to Mr. Shields from the Virginia Municipal League about the City getting an achievement award for their City Tree Program. She was concerned that the Village Preservation and Improvement Society was not mentioned because it was originally their project and she'd like to make sure they were included in any awards.

Ms. Cotellessa said the category of this award was cities and towns of less than 50,000. The specific thing was to take an individual program that was new or a program that had been changed in some way. They nominated the Neighborhood Tree Program because it just began in the past year. The grant application thoroughly gave background on VPIS and all of its participation. The VML award is actually being given in October and Mr. Jeff Peterson and Mr. Seth Hemingway from the Neighborhood Tree Program were invited to attend. It's very well recognized that VPIS was part of this program and if VPIS did not have a copy of that application, she would make sure they received it.

Ms. Teates said a copy of it was handed out at the last VPIS Board meeting.

Ms. Hockenberry went to the environmental gathering at the property yard for viewing the different environmental impact things and said Bill Hicks did a very good job with the presentation. She thought it might be good to be seen by City Council and the Planning Commission.

7. OLD BUSINESS:

National Community Planning Month Discussion

Ms. Cotellessa had sent the commissioners a proclamation now before City Council. City Council will be issuing this proclamation on September 30th, which would kick off National Community Planning Month.

She added that while Falls Church had great ideas to invite adjacent communities

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and she had tried to work with the Northern Virginia Planning Commission to put feelers out to other planning departments and boards and other communities, the response had been a little less than lukewarm.

One option she suggested was to plan it a half year earlier. Another was doing a photo contest among the elementary school children as to what is sustainable about Falls Church. She opened it up to the planning commissioners for any other thoughts.

Ms. Teates was on an Educational Task force for the Environmental Services Council and they do Ecology Club and Operation Earthwatch, which has a program for kids in elementary schools where they take a sheet home and do a certain number of environmental projects each month and turn it back in. She suggested it could be put in as an item as one of the things they could choose to do in October. She could check to see if there was room on the sheet which wouldn't be put out for another week or two.

Chair Lawrence said if anybody had ideas, to please send them to Ms. Cotellessa.

8. NEW BUSINESS: None.

9. OTHER BUSINESS: None.

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - SEPTEMBER 8, 2009

Ms. Rodgers moved, and Ms. Teates seconded, to approve the minutes as amended.

Upon voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

11. ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Teates moved, and Ms. Hockenberry seconded, to adjourn at 7:26 p.m. Immediately following the Planning Commission meeting, a joint City Council/Planning Commission worksession to receive an update on the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite was held in the training center.